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RIGGS, ELLIOTT A.
A HOG DRIVE TO EVANSVILLE,
1879

A HOG DRIVE TO EVANSVILLE, 1879

This is the account of a fourteen year old country boy's first visit to the city in 1879. Mr. Elmer E. Elliott helped drive a herd of 140 hogs from New Harmony, Indiana to Evansville, Indiana, on that occasion a trip of two days and a distance of 25 miles.

This account was taken from a magnetic tape interview which was made at Mr. Elliott's home December 28, 1959, New Harmony, Indiana.

By Elliott A. Riggs

The Ohio Valley Folk Research Project
The Ross County Historical Society
Chillicothe, Ohio 1960

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EDITOR'S NOTE : Elmer Ellsworth Elliott is the great grandson of James Elliott, an Englishman who bought land at New Harmony, Indiana, when the Owen Community failed, about 1827. This land has remained in the Elliott family and members still live in New Harmony.

- D.K.W. Sr

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elliott Arthur Riggs was born February 13, 1929 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and he spent most of his early years in this state. His formal education includes work at the University of Wisconsin where he received a B.S. in geology in 1951 and an M.S. in the same field in 1953. He is presently working toward a PhD at the University of Illinois.

Mr. Riggs' service career commenced in 1953 with duty at the U.S. Navy Post-Graduate School, Monterey, California. Subsequently he became Forecast Duty Officer with U.S. Fleet Weather Central at Port Lyautey, Morocco. He remained at this post until his release in 1957.

His extensive travel include itineraries in North America, North Africa and Europe. Prospecting ventures have taken him to Ontario and British Columbia in the search for gold and silver. He was employed by the Ohio Oil Company and worked in the Williston Basin during the "black gold rush" of the early 50's.

Elliott's avocational interests include the collection and study of old coins, stamps, old books, armor, Western lore, and the folk lore of the Mid-west. The following story is the first that he has put to the pen. It has special meaning to him since his family has its roots in the Evansville area. Both of his parents are from that area and his mother's ancestors were part of the old Owens Community at New Harmony, Indiana.

-D.K.W. Jr.

University of Illinois,
February 12, 1960.

A HOG DRIVE TO EVANSVILLE, 1879

I was born August 27, 1865, soon after the massacre of Lincoln. That's an interesting point because we lived right down here close to the South. The Ohio River's the border between the North and South. It was quite an event at that time.

I'd never been to Evansville. You couldn't go by rail. There weren't any railroads in Posey County -- 'cept the L&N which goes through Mt. Vernon from St. Louis and then south from Evansville. The people here that handled stock either had to haul 'em in a wagon or drive 'em. They drove 'em through on the roads mostly. The farms were all fenced and they drove the cattle, hogs, mules and horses on through. Had several men along to keep 'em on the road the best yuh could. The stock yards over at Evansville were new that year (1879), I believe.

It was during the Christmas holidays and Billy Veets, a one-armed man that used to be here as a buyer and trader, asked me if I wanted to go along. I didn't get paid for it, but I had a pony and he said that if I wanted to go, he'd pay my expenses and I could go and see Evansville. I had never been to a city before and had never seen any street cars.

I went out to Veets' the night before. Veets lived right out about 2 miles east of where John Elliot lives now, on the road to Evansville. John Veets was a little bit older'n me -- 'bout a year or two --- but he was about my size --- wasn't any bigger than I was. I thought I was about as important as he was. He was the one I used to hunt with, so we were buddies together.

There were five of us started the next morning -- four riders and one man on the wagon -- Billy and John Veets, Tom Anderson, Jim Franklin and myself. The road didn't go where it does now. It was a dirt track -- everything was dirt roads then. We had a wagon with

us 'cause when a hog would get tired we'd let the end gate down and put him in. It had side boards on it and he couldn't get out. He'd just ride 'til we'd get too many and then we'd take some that had been rested up and change 'em around. We kept the wagon pretty well filled up with stragglers that got tired.

Hogs drive pretty well if you don't get 'em too fat. You've got to go slow though -- my goodness you can't hurry 'em. You wouldn't dare to feed 'em like they did sometime later when they had a way to ship 'em. You could have 'em only moderately fat. There was this one ole sow that was kinda contrary, had to watch her all the time to keep her from getting out on the side. She didn't much like to make the trip I guess.

We walked with the hogs and led our horses. It was too cold to ride. The fella on the wagon; kept him behind the hogs all the time so if any needed picking up he could. He had to walk too or he'd freeze sitting up there on that wagon.

Well, we had a good dinner on the way up. Stopped at a German woman's and had some of the best sausage. I often speak about that yet. It was the best sausage I ever ate. I was good and hungry and it had a little garlic in it and I always did like that -- it was extry good. She had plenty of it and encouraged us to eat so we had a good dinner.

That afternoon one of the riders went ahead and engaged a place for us to stay all night. He found an old German farmer family that lived right there on the Posey County line. They had a big barn and a big lot where the hogs could get in around the barn. The ole house where we stayed was just about like a shelter and that's all. That night we had snareribs for supper and the darn things were leaved I could smell 'em cookin'. I just wondered if I was going to get

something new that I didn't know anything about. I knew all about spareribs, I thought, but they could eat 'em spoiled a little. Some foreigners do that, and different kinds of foreigners too. They used to do that more 'n they do now of course. They didn't mind 'em, they just ate 'em right along. I tried some of 'em but I couldn't go 'em. We had light bread, apple butter and potatoes I believe. I made out all right but those spareribs kind of stopped me.

They had an attic up overhead -- kind of a second story -- cold up there though -- cold as the dickens. It was a whole big place, wasn't cut up into rooms. We got up there and we had three beds. Billy Veets said I'd better sleep with him, so we got up to the bed and I didn't see any covers -- just a bed tick laying there.

He said, "Get in!"

I said, "Get in where?"

He said, "Why there in that bed!"

I said, "No cover there!"

Then he jerked back one of those bed ticks -- it was a feather bed to cover you with. That was the cover. Had a feather bed under us and one over the top of us. I got in the back side and he slept in front. Part of the time he had too many feathers and part of the time I had too many. When he had most of the feathers I was pretty near freezin' and sometimes he'd get cold. Anyway that's the way we slept. Ole German woman had lots of geese I guess -- she had lots of feather beds.

I forget about breakfast. Had something to eat though and got started on our trip into Evansville. We delivered our hogs to the stockyards, got in about one or two o'clock. I don't remember how much he got for the hogs. Veets was speculating on 'em. He'd scour the country all around, gather 'em up and drive 'em to market. That's

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an interesting point about that too. There wasn't any means of shipping and there wasn't any of the farmers that took daily papers. They didn't know what the price was hardly -- they'd have to find out by hearsay. But some fella'd go out through the country and he'd stop at every farm house and say, "You got any fat hogs for sale?" They all had hogs, but he wanted fat hogs. "Well, yes, might have a few." Same way about cattle, or anything else they wanted to buy and that's the way trading was done. There wasn't any established market like there is now. You can go out now and run around all over the country and ask about that and the farmer would say, "Well, I believe I'll take mine over to Evansville when I get 'em fat." You wouldn't find anybody'd want to sell to you. They want to get the price there is that day.

We had a late dinner after we delivered the hogs. Had an arrangement with the Wyatt Gentry family that lived near there on a farm. It was farm land then -- all city now. We got a good dinner, stayed around there awhile and then we started out to see Evansville on horseback.

The streetcars they had over there were little dinkeys 'bout like these school buses that they have now and they'd pull 'em on rails. They pulled 'em with a pair of little mules hitched onto the front of 'em --- looked like a couple of gophers trying to pull a big ole bus behind 'em. They had had a big snow and it was slick. It had begun to thaw and the street got muddy. The drivers would just whip and slash all the time. The little mules 'd slip down on the track and all the harness they had on 'em was just traces --- they didn't even have back bands I don't believe -- just round traces. The drivers 'd have to get out and slip the trace over their backs and get 'em up, and they'd go to whipping and slashing again. That's the

way they got around in the city -- the people that didn't walk.

We rode up and down at a gallop all over Evansville to see it -- makin' short work of it. We had our horses' tails tied up. We'd tie it clear to the bone to keep the mud from splashin' up in it. Some way they got down and they got just like a big rope of mud. Were we a sight when we got back --- those horses with mud all over 'em.

We had the next day to see Evansville too and we rode down to the river to see the train come in off'n the big ferry boat from Henderson, Kentucky. You don't see that very often now -- all bridges everywhere now. They'd just run the train right on the ferry boat and ferry it downstream to Evansville.

Then we --- by Gosh we rode home that night --- over to Veets'. When we got in those horses were just plastered -- my goodness -- we were too -- legs all muddy. We stayed at Veets' all night and then the next day I went straggling on home and I was just about all in too. I had all the horsebackin' I wanted for a few days.

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Ohio Valley Folk Research Project

publications released in 1960 as of 6-15-1960

1 "Sage's Purple Passion " by Ben Hayes	New Series No. 37
2 "Hair Balls and the Witch" by Melissa Hughes	New Series No. 38
3 "Uncle Remus in Syracuse " by Lawrence S. Thompson	New Series No. 39
4 "Hewitt, the Hermit" by James Emmitt	New Series No. 40
5 "Tobacco Folklore " by Lawrence S. Thompson	New Series No. 41
6 "Ox, Capon and the Hare" by Yancy Yaddin	New Series No. 42
7 "Hugh Mosher, the Fifer" by Robert L. Walden	New Series No. 43
8 "Control of Grasshoppers" by Raymond Embree	New Series No. 44
9 "The Lost Silver Mine" by Dr. Carl R. Bogardus	New Series No. 45
10 "Hog Drive to Evansville ,1879" by Elmer S. Elliott	New Series No. 46
11 "Johnny Appleseed " by Roselia Rice	New Series No. 47
12 "Squirrel Broth " by Merrill C. Gilfillan	New Series No. 48
13 "The Undertaker's Revenge" by Jean Dow	New Series No. 49
14 "The Jackson County Madstones" by Dr. Gwyn Parry	New Series No. 50
15 "The Feast of Rocks" by Adlyn Keffer	New Series No. 51
16 "Song, Legend of Pa. and W. Va" by Keysner and Whiting	New Series No. 52
17 "Lazy Tom " by Ellen Margolis	New Series No. 53
18 "The Story of Nelson T. Gant" by Norris F. Schneider	New Series No. 54
19 "The Big Blow" by Lucille Seale	New Series No. 55

NOTE: Other folk publications are being planned for publication during 1960. Microfilm copies of back numbers of our folk publications by application to the Director of Libraries, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Subscription price for the series is \$5.00 per year by application to The Ohio Valley Folk Research Project, Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, Ohio. Single copies and back-numbers of the 1960 series when and if available are 50 ¢ each. --- D.K.W. Editor.

